



National Wildland Fire Critical Incident Stress Management Program

Date: June 28, 2018

To: Supervisors, Critical Incident Stress Management Program Members

From: National Critical Incident Stress Program Managers

Subject: Critical Incident Stress Management Program Members

On behalf of the National Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program, we would like to thank you for your support and allowing your employee to participate as a member.

This CISM program is intended to assist employees affected by traumatic events outside of their normal work experience. Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) can reduce human distress when applied by trained, qualified specialists, including peers, and licensed mental health professionals (MHP) under appropriate circumstances. The CISM program does not replace the professional services available to agency employees.

The CISM program does not maintain “CISM Teams.” Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) Groups are assembled at the time of the request. A CIPS Group consists of trained and certified Peer Supporters who’s their backgrounds and skill sets are similar to those involved in the critical incident (helitack, engines, smokejumpers, etc.). Peer Supporters are selected based on the employee’s availability and supervisor’s approval.

CISM assignments are unique, and differ from “fire assignments.” They typically don’t last more than five to seven days, including travel. On rare occasion, they may reach 14 days. When this occurs, it’s usually a result of a re-assignment to another incident or extraordinary circumstances.

Peer supporters may be impacted emotionally due to exposure to the trauma and distress experienced by those affected by an event. Critical Incident Peer Support Group Leaders are responsible for monitoring the well-being of group members. However, Peer Supporters are also responsible for monitoring their own personal well-being. By maintaining a work/life balance, emotional and physical fitness, and a healthy lifestyle, the rewards of being a peer supporter can be invaluable.

Peer Supporters are considered as trainees until they’ve completed one or two assignments. Assignment experience depends on complexity and duration of the incident. Trainees who have

expressed an interest and have applied to the program are considered priority trainees. An effort will be made to mobilize them before other trainees who have not formally applied to the program.

Administrative Considerations

- CISM personnel must be self-sufficient (i.e., travel card, purchase card).
- A fire camp type setting is not provided.
- Most CISM assignments require commercial airline travel, rental cars, and hotel.
- Laptops, rental cars, and cell phones are approved at the time of order.
- Peer Supporters are ordered through the dispatch/coordination system (resource order) for fire suppression related incidents.
- Most Geographic Areas do not place a resource order for non-fire related incidents.
- Time is approved by the Critical Incident Peer Support Group Leader.
- All CISM personnel are required to follow Incident Business Management policies such as work/rest guidelines and driving regulations.
- After extremely difficult assignments, CIPS Group Leads or CISM Coordinators may provide a letter recommending/approving Administrative Leave.

CISM personnel are encouraged to follow the attached Code of Ethics. Peer Supporters should never be used outside the scope of their training. CISM personnel are required to have a variety of Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) courses based on their skill set and willingness to acquire additional qualifications and your support. More information is available on the national CISM website at <https://gacc.nifc.gov/cism/index.html>

If you have any questions, please contact me at nstclair@blm.gov or Eric Martinez at epmartinez@fs.fed.us.

/s/ Nelda St. Clair

/s/ Eric Martinez